

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 101179  
ORIGIN AF-10

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66011  
DRAFTED BY AF/E:PGSMITH  
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P 200216Z APR 78  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2930

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LONDON FOR SEITZ

FOLLOWING REPEAT LILONGWE 569 APR 17.

QUOTE: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LILONGWE 0569

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: SHUM, PDIP, OVIP, MI (BANDA, H. KAMUZU)

REF: A. LILONGWE 0560; B LILONGWE 0545

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. AT AIRPORT SATURDAY MORNING, APRIL 15, I WAS CALLED FROM VIEWING STAND, WHERE PRE-DEPARTURE CEREMONIES WERE TAKING PLACE IN HONOR OF PRESIDENT BANDA, TO SEPAK WITH GOV. TEMBO. GOV. TEMBO SAID HE WISHED TO TALK WITH ME ABOUT THE CASE OF AUSTIN MBISA. HE THEN RELATED THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OF EVENTS AS HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO ASCERTAIN THEM FOLLOWING OUR TELEPHONE CONVERSATION (REF A). HE SAID AUSTIN MBISA HAD BEEN CLEARED TO GO TO HIS POSITION AT CHANCELLOR COLLEGE IN ZOMBA AND HAD REPORTED TO THE UNIVERSITY ON FEB 6. AT THAT TIME, IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, HE BECAME  
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AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THERE WAS A LETTER IN HIS FILE IN WHICH HE HAD INDICATED ONE REASON HE WAS ASKING FOR A CONTINUANCE OF HIS STAY IN THE U.S. WAS BECAUSE OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY AND ITS EFFECT ON THE UNIVERSITY. FINDING THAT THE UNIVERSITY HAD A COPY OF THIS LETTER UPSET HIM GREATLY AND HE DECLARED THAT HE WISHED TO SPEAK TO THE POLICE ABOUT IT.

HE RETURNED TO THEHOSTEL AND SPOKE TO A REPRESENTATIVE OF SPECIAL BRANCH AT THEHOSTEL. HE WAS QUESTIONED BRIEFLY BUT NOT TAKEN INTO CUSTODY AND THE AUTHORITIES SUBSEQUENTLY DECIDED THAT THE MATTER WAS NOT SERIOUS AS THE LETTER WAS WRITTEN AT A TIME WHEN THERE HAD BEEN DETENTIONS OF FACULTY MEMBERS FOR POLITICAL REASONS. TEMBO SAID HE HAD BEEN TOLD THAT MBISA BECAME VERY UPSET AND DISTRAUGHT AND HAD ACTED VERY STRNGLY THE FOLLOWING DAY. IN THEMORNING OF WEDNESDAY, FEB 8, AN EMPLOYEE OF THEHOSTEL FOUND HE HAD HUNG HIMSELF IN HIS ROOM. TEMBO SAID THAT, AS CHAIRMAN OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL, HE WAS DISTRESSED TO LEARN OF THIS SUICIDE. HE ADDED THAT ONE OF AUSTIN'S RELATIVES WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE POLICE FORCE HAD INDICATED TO THEPOLICE THAT IN THEPAST OTHER MEMBERS OF THE MBISA FAMILY HAVE SHOWN EMOTIONAL INSTABILITY AND HAVE COMMITTED SUICIDE. HE SAID THAT HE HAS ASKEDTHE MALAWI POLICE COMMISSIONER, KAMWANA, TO PUT TOGETHER A FULL AND DETAILED REPORT OF THE CASE AND SEND IT TO PRESIDENT BANDA IN LONDON. FROM THERE HE IMPLIED THAT A REPORT WILL BE SENT TO AMB. MUWAMBA IN THE U.S. END UNCLASSIFIED.

2. BEGIN LOU. COMMENT: AS PRESIDENT BANDA WAS JUST ABOUT READY TO BEGIN HIS SPEECH, I HAD NO OPPORTUNITY TO QUESTION GOV. TEMBO FURTHER. IT WAS CLEAR TO ME THAT HE HAD NOT MENTIONED THE MATTER TO PRESIDENT BANDA AS I HAD URGED AND REQUESTEDHIM TO DO SOME INCONSISTENCIES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND DISCREPANCIES ARE APPARENT RE SOME DETAILS OF THE CASE AS IT IS KNOWN TO US SO FAR. IN MY OPINION, THIS IS PROBABLY DUE TO A VERY TRADITIONAL CUSTOM OF TRYING TO SHUNT ASIDE OR BURY EMBARRASSING MATTERS AND, EVEN MORE, TO THE OSSIBILITY THAT ALL THOSE INVOLVED, AND PARTICULARLY THEPOLICE COMMISSIONER AND JOHN NGWIRI, WERE HORRIFIED TO LEARN THAT THIS CASE TOUCHED UPON THE UNIV. OF INDIANA AND THAT PRESIDENT BANDA HAD NEVER BEEN INFORMED OF IT. I, MYSELF, AM REASONABLY PERSUADED THAT WE HAVE THE ESSENTIAL FACTS OF THE CASE FOR OUR PURPOSES, I.E., THAT MBISA'S DEATH WAS A SUICIDE; THAT HE WAS NOT PHYSICALLY MISTREATED IN ANY WAY BEFORE HE TOOK THIS STEP; AND THAT, ALTHOUGH IT IS A TRAGEDY FOR HIS FAMILY, HIS FRIENDS, AND A SAD LOSS FOR HIS COUNTRY,HIS DEATH DOES NOT INVOLVE A QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. STEVENSON UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** DEATHS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 20 apr 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978STATE101179  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** PGSMITH  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780168-0837  
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**Office:** ORIGIN AF  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Reference:** 78 LILONGWE 560  
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**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
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**Review Transfer Date:**  
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**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** SUICIDE OF AUSTIN MBISA  
**TAGS:** SHUM, PDIP, OVIP, MI, (BANDA, H KAMUZU), (MBISA, AUSTIN)  
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**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
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